Fire departments providing assistance by mutual aid do not bill the receiving communities for their services.

Fire Department Management & Labor Organizations

Without exception the only successful efforts to create a regionalized fire service have included active participation from both the fire chiefs and fire fighters. In the MetroWest subregion the fire chiefs have forged a history of cooperation through mutual aid agreements and other joint efforts coordinated through Fire District Fourteen and Metrofire Association. The fire fighters are represented by a state-wide labor organization as well as local unions. The following information presents an overview of these organizations, their position on regionalism, and how they interact with the local fire departments and personnel.

Fire District Fourteen and Metrofire Association

Both Fire District Fourteen and Metrofire Association are organizations run by the Chief Officers of their member communities. All MetroWest communities, with the exception of Wellesley and Weston, are located within Fire District Fourteen. Wellesley and Weston are members of Metrofire Association. Fire District Fourteen represents twenty-one contiguous communities in and around the MetroWest subregion. Each community pays $1,000 per year to be a member of the District. The Weston and Wellesley fire departments belong to Metrofire Association, composed of 34 fire departments and Massport in the metropolitan Boston area. This organization was created in 1976, with the assistance of MAPC, and expanded in 1980. Members pay $1,500 per year. In general, both associations have been responsible for developing and organizing the following activities:

- Coordination of all fire service mutual aid activities;
- Overall planning for coordinated activities in times of emergencies and disasters;
- Some coordinated training and education programs;
- A district-wide multiple access radio system;
- Collective purchasing;
- The purchase and mutual sharing of common resources that are vital and specialized, but only occasionally used, such as foam and air supplies.

The Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts

The Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts (PFFM) is a state-wide labor organization representing 12,000 members and 170 local unions. In 1991, the PFFM contracted Harvard's Kennedy School of Government to prepare a report on the aspects of regionalism. Using Fire District Fourteen as a case study, the report concluded that a consolidated fire district would save the participating communities money, improve response times, and allow better opportunities for professional training and public education. The study included profiles of other communities around the country that had regionalized fire services, and in all cases the consolidated district worked to the betterment of the municipalities and fire fighters.

The PFFM has also expressed concern with the use of mutual aid by local fire departments, in recent years. The Union believes that many communities are relying on mutual aid to compensate for reductions in budgets, staff and equipment due to the fiscal constraints caused by the approval of Proposition 2 1/2 in 1980. Communities are sending resources out to assist other communities more often, at greater travel distance, with greater response time and increased safety risks to the fire fighter. The result has been a "merging" or sharing of fire services